

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Environmental Action Statement

Within the spirit and intent of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record and determined that the action of (describe action):

Check One:

- _____ is a categorical exclusion as provided by 40 CFR 1508.4, 43 CFR 46.210 and 516 DM 8.5. (reference which CatEx was used for this determination). No further NEPA documentation will therefore be made.
- X is found not to have significant environmental effects as determined by the attached environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact.
- _____ is found to have significant effects and, therefore, further consideration of this action will require a notice of intent to be published in the Federal Register announcing the decision to prepare an EIS.
- _____ is not approved because of unacceptable environmental damage, or violation of Fish and Wildlife Service mandates, policy, regulations, or procedures.
- _____ is an emergency action within the context of 40 CFR 1506.11. Only those actions necessary to control the immediate impacts of the emergency will be taken. Other related actions remain subject to NEPA review.

Other supporting documents (list):

- Haines Borough Portage Cove Harbor Expansion Permitting Documents of July 28, 2015, which includes drawings, alternatives analysis (page 42), biological assessment (page 75), and habitat functional assessment (page 130)
- PND's modification request for POA-2005-1976 of June 7, 2016
- Department of the Army Combined Decision Document (Environmental Assessment) for POA-2005-1976 of June 15, 2016
- National Marine Fisheries Service section 7(a)(2) determination letter of March 15, 2016

Signature Approval:

Mary A Price
(1) Originator

3/27/17
Date

Sam J. Klein
(2) WSFR Chief

3/27/17
Date

[Signature]
(3) ARD

03/28/17
Date

(4) Regional Director

Date

U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 7, Alaska

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Portage Cove Boat Launch Improvements, Haines, Alaska

Summary

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for and permitted (POA-2005-1976) a harbor expansion project in Portage Cove near Haines, Alaska. This harbor expansion project includes dredging, fill, new docks, new breakwater construction, additional harbor parking and relocation of the recreational boat launch to a different part of the harbor. The EA was completed before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) became involved in the boat launch portion of the harbor expansion project through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration's Boating Access grant program. The EA of the harbor expansion project adequately addresses the construction of the new recreational boat launch, and the Service will adopt the EA in making the decision for the Portage Cove Boat Launch Improvements action.

Proposed Action Purpose and Need

The Haines Borough (Borough) and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Division of Sport Fish have entered into a cooperative agreement to fund a project with a Sport Fish Restoration Act (SFRA) grant to develop a boat launch ramp, boarding float and parking for vehicles with boat trailers in the Haines Small Boat Harbor as a sub-activity of a larger harbor-wide expansion project. The SFRA requires the Service to administer 15% of the excise taxes paid by anglers and boaters to states for recreational boating access facilities. The proposed boat launch is the type of project envisioned for fishing and recreational boating access when Congress passed the Act.

The Haines Small Boat Harbor is located in Portage Cove, Alaska, adjacent to the town of Haines. The harbor, completed in 1976, is the primary marine access site servicing Haines. In order to keep up with current and projected demands, the Haines Borough plans to modernize and expand Portage Cove Harbor to support the commercial and recreational fishing fleet and local economy. Haines has been planning a harbor expansion for nearly 20 years. The project will construct harbor and wave protection facilities to increase capacity while providing safe vessel navigation, moorage, launching, loading, staging and parking improvements. The SFRA project will contribute to the overall harbor expansion by replacing the old single-lane boat ramp with a double-lane boat ramp, a boarding float and associated upland parking for the vehicles and boat trailers using the launch.

The original boat ramp was constructed in the early 1970's. In 2004 the ADF&G was contacted by the Borough for assistance in renovating the ramp as it had exceeded its design life and was in need of replacement. The ADF&G hired an engineering consulting company to develop several concepts for a renovated launch facility in Portage Cove. The preferred concept involved re-locating the ramp behind a new breakwater on the south side of the harbor as part of a larger harbor expansion project. Construction of the new ramp was deferred until the harbor expansion project was underway and the breakwater designed and permitted to protect the new launch facility. A temporary repair was made to the existing ramp in 2006 to make it functional until the launch could be relocated and rebuilt in a more preferable location.

The current ramp is not usable at all tide stages, leading to user congestion at low tides. The lack of a boarding float makes launching difficult and there is insufficient parking for vehicles with trailers. Sport angler effort increased about 43 percent from 2010 to 2014, adding to the pressure to improve launch facilities, in order to provide a more functional and efficient means to reach the Haines marine fisheries.

As part of the harbor expansion project permitting process, the Army Corps of Engineers prepared a Combined Decision Document, which constitutes an EA. This EA covers the full harbor expansion project, including the new boat ramp and associated parking. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) only considers the Portage Cove Boat Launch Improvements portion of the harbor expansion which are: 1) a new boat ramp; 2) boarding float; and 3) parking for vehicles with boat trailers (Figure 1).

Alternatives Considered

The alternatives are described in detail in the Haines Borough Portage Cove Harbor Expansion Permitting Documents, Section 4, Alternatives Analysis, (404)(b)(1) Evaluation. In summary, the alternatives evaluated included: 1) expansion protected by a rubble mound breakwater; 2) expansion protected by a vertical wave barrier (preferred); 3) harbor expansion to the north of the existing harbor; and 4) no action.

Alternative 1 included a rubble mound breakwater as an extension of the existing rubble mound breakwater, and was initially preferred due to long term performance and aesthetic reasons. However, geotechnical investigations revealed soft soils that would require substantially more expensive construction techniques. This alternative was rejected because of high costs, and it would require more fill and provide less new space within the harbor than the vertical wave barrier considered in Alternative 2.

Alternative 2 (preferred) is similar to Alternative 1 except a vertical wave barrier is used as an extension from the end of the existing rubble mound breakwater. Utilizing a vertical wave barrier allows more space for moorage, and better fulfills the project purpose.

Alternative 3 involved expansion adjacent to the existing harbor on the north side. This alternative was considered in detail in an earlier harbor expansion analysis (*2004 USACE Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact – Navigation Improvements Haines, Alaska* and the *2004 Interim Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment – Navigation Improvements Haines, Alaska*). Expansion to the north involved larger area impacts seaward of the high tide line. When soft soils were found throughout the area, the costs became prohibitive due to special construction methods needed to build there.

Alternative 4 is the “no action” alternative. It would result in no additional impacts to the aquatic environment within the proposed project area. However, it was rejected since it would result in no expansion and modernization of the harbor and thus does not meet the project purpose and need.

Offsite locations were also considered (Alternatives Analysis Section 3.3). These were dismissed as practical alternatives. The proposed project is associated with the existing Portage Cove Harbor on property owned by the applicant. It would be unreasonably expensive to require the applicant to obtain another tidelands tract in Haines, as the proposal is an expansion of the

existing facility. Also, to require the applicant to locate the proposal to another site would result in adversely impacting a more environmentally sensitive aquatic resource.

Due to cost, logistical, and environmental risk factors, the proposed action is the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative.

Public Involvement/Interagency Coordination

Forty-three public meetings were held between 2009 and 2015, after advertisement.

Supporting Documents

- Haines Borough Portage Cove Harbor Expansion Permitting Documents dated July 28, 2015, which includes drawings, alternatives analysis (page 42), biological assessment (page 75), and habitat functional assessment (page 130)
- PND's modification request for POA-2005-1976 dated June 7, 2016
- Department of the Army Combined Decision Document for Permit POA-2005-1976 dated June 15, 2016
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Public Review

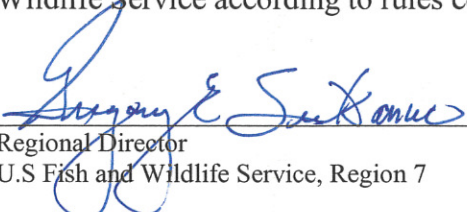
The EA and FONSI will be made available to the public on the Region 7 website <https://www.fws.gov/alaska/mbasp/fa/index.htm> for a period of time not less than 30 days from the date of the signature below.

Decision and Rationale

The analysis in the information provided by the applicant and the EA indicates that there will not be a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment as a result of the proposed action.

I find that all reasonable alternatives were considered in the evaluation of this project. I also find that this project complies with the meaning of Executive Order 11990 and 11988. Therefore, based on a review and evaluation of the enclosed EA, I have determined the proposed project entitled, "Portage Cove Boat Launch Improvements, Haines, Alaska" is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed action is not required.

The EA, prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service according to rules contained in 40 CFR 1506.3.


Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 7

28 March 2017
Date

Figure 1. General site plan of Portage Cove Harbor Expansion. The area outlined in red is the approximate recreational boat launch project area.

